

Lower-Class Sexuality: Some Emotional and Social Aspects in West German Males and Females¹

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Emotional and social aspects of lower-class sexuality in West Germany are examined on the basis of results of interviews with 150 male and 150 female, single, 20–21-year-old, unskilled or semi-skilled workers from six large cities. Particular attention was given to the relation between sexuality and love, the significance of fidelity and virginity, partner mobility, mutuality of sexual relations, attitudes to marriage and family, double standards and gender roles, emotional reactions to coitus, as well as the experience of orgasm in the female. A comparison between American and Scandinavian patterns of lower-class sexuality shows that the West German pattern is largely congruent with the Scandinavian pattern.

INTRODUCTION

The few investigations which have thus far appeared on lower-class sexuality throw considerable doubt on the existence of a uniform pattern of sexual behavior in the lower classes of the Western industrial societies. On the basis of results reported and discussed elsewhere (Schmidt and Sigusch, 1971), at least two culture-specific patterns of lower-class sexuality can be differentiated. Similar to Christensen's study (1966) of premarital sexuality among students, these patterns can be classified as the American and Scandinavian patterns.

The American Pattern

In the USA there are apparently considerable differences in sexuality between the lower and middle classes. Although lower-class men and women engage in coital relationships much earlier compared to members of the middle class (Kinsey *et al.*, 1948, 1953; Gebhard *et al.*, 1958), they experience in the emotional and psychosocial sphere much greater sexual uncertainty and deprivation before as well as within marriage (Whyte, 1943; Rainwater, 1960, 1964, 1965, 1966; Komarovsky, 1964;

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Clark, 1965; Hammond and Ladner, 1969). Their sexual relations are often devoid of emotion and mechanical in nature; the mutuality of the interpersonal relationship is nearly absent or disturbed, and with it sexual communication as well. According to Rainwater (1965, 1966) this sexual segregation is a special form of the general social segregation of lower-class couples. In the end, an extreme double standard results from the especially strong internalization of gender-role stereotypes: women regard themselves and are regarded as "asexual" or at the least "hyposexual." Correspondingly they show little interest in sexual relations, look at sexuality as a duty, experience it without desire and pleasure, and often have difficulty achieving orgasm.

The Scandinavian Pattern

According to available Danish and Swedish investigations we find only minimal class-specific sexual variations (Jonsson, 1951; Hertoft, 1968, 1970; Zetterberg, 1969; Israel *et al.*, 1970). "Romantic love ideology" is widespread in all social levels and determines a pronounced partner-centered sexual behavior directed toward mutuality. Sexual relations are decidedly satisfying and positive experiences for both men and women. Attitudes of the double standard type occur extremely seldom. Contrary to the American, the Scandinavian lower classes appear to be oriented largely toward the sexual norms of a "liberal bourgeoisie."

In the following, a report will be given on an investigation of young West German male and female workers. This investigation is the first study of lower-class sexuality carried out in West Germany. On the basis of our data we want to discuss emotional and social aspects and explore the question of whether the sexuality of West German workers is to be classified under the American or Scandinavian patterns of lower-class sexuality.

METHOD

A detailed description of the method is given elsewhere (Schmidt and Sigusch, 1971), and we can limit ourselves here to the following points:

The sample encompassed 150 female and 150 male workers. All were unskilled or semi-skilled, single, 20 or 21 years old, lived in six larger cities of West Germany (Hamburg, Essen, Cologne, Frankfurt, Stuttgart, and Munich), and worked in concerns with at least 50 employees. In every case half of those questioned were Protestant and half Catholic. The selection was made according to the quota technique. The sample can be regarded as sufficiently representative of the target population of young, single, semi-skilled or unskilled, urban workers born in 1947 or 1948.

The data were secured through personal interview. We carried out the field work in 1968 and 1969 together with an institute for motivation research. All interviewers were men between 25 and 40 years of age and were specially trained by us for this investigation. The structured interviews were carried out by means of a questionnaire, which was developed by us and tested in a pilot study.

The questionnaire contained some 300 single questions. The following thematic areas were covered in this sequence: spare time; heterosexual development, first

coitus, coitus behavior in the 12 months prior to interview, going steady, attitudes to premarital relations, to extramarital sexuality, to sexual abstinence, to promiscuity, to marriage and family, to abortion, and to masturbation; masturbation behavior, and personal background.

Lastly it should be noted here that methodological difficulty in securing data about the psychosocial sphere of sexuality is extraordinarily great. This stems in no small part from the inherent complexity of the phenomena under examination and from the defence mechanisms that surface when inquiries are made on such taboo themes. These difficulties certainly can be reduced or eliminated, but only in part, by careful formulation of the questionnaire and by adroit management of the interview. Thus, seen rigorously, our results can be regarded as only tentative.

RESULTS

Since we will only be treating certain emotional and social aspects of lower-class sexuality in this work, we will present as background information some particularly relevant data on sexual behavior (see also Schmidt and Sigusch, *in press*): At age 19 (more exactly up to the 20th birthday) 72% of the male and 67% of the female workers examined had experienced coitus. The average age (median) at first coitus was 18.4 years for men and 18.8 years for women. Thus West German workers start coital relations some four years earlier than male and female students (Schmidt and Sigusch, *in press*). In the year prior to the study, 71% of the workers of both sexes had coitus at least occasionally. The average (median) frequency of the active groups was strikingly low at 2.4 (men) and 3.2 (women) occurrences of coitus per month.

Up to the age of 19 years, 92% of the male workers and 43% of the female workers had experienced masturbation. Fifty-seven percent (men) and 15% (women) masturbated at least occasionally in the year prior to the interview.

Romantic Love

The workers regard their sexuality as a preeminently person-centered activity. This is already shown by the premarital standards (see Table I), which we classified according to Reiss's typology (1960): Most of the men (47%) and women (56%) approved of "permissiveness with affection," i.e., they approved coital relations in the presence of affection or love. Only 20% of the women and 34% of the men do not make this a condition and stand for "permissiveness without affection."

The adherents of the transitional double standard (20% of the women and 18% of the men) likewise champion the "romantic" ideology, which, however, is applicable only to the woman; while premarital relations are allowed the men in any case, women must first fulfill the condition "affection" or "love." An orthodox double standard, according to which women are not permitted premarital intercourse under any circumstances, while men may do so without limitation, as well as equalitarian-restrictive attitudes, according to which premarital sexual relations are denied both sexes under all circumstances, were found only in very few cases (1-3%).

Equalitarian-permissive attitudes therefore dominate with particular emphasis on

Table I. Attitudes Toward Premarital Coitus^a

	Males (N = 150)	Females (N = 150)
Permissiveness with affection	47	56
Permissiveness without affection	34	20
Double standard, transitional	18	20
Double standard, orthodox	1	1
Restrictiveness, equalitarian	1	3
	101	100

^a Significance of the sex-specific difference (according to chi-square): $p = 0.01$. For the calculation of chi-square, categories 3, 4, and 5 were combined. All values are in percent.

the relationship of sex to love. This basic disposition results in a tendency toward steady friendships (see Table II) which 47% of the males and 72% of the females had at the time of interview. They intended to marry in most cases. Those without such a friendship often regretted it. Only 17% of the males and 15% of the females had no steady partner and desired none. The strong tendency toward "pair-bond" becomes especially clear when one learns the duration of the relationships. Approximately three-fifths had their steady for 1 year or longer, more than a third for 2 years or more. Fixation on a partner therefore often occurs already in earliest adult life. It is already apparent here how much the sexual behavior patterns of these single workers are oriented toward the model of the "monogamous marriage."

That "romantic love" is behind partner-centeredness can be suspected not only from the widespread standard of "permissiveness with affection," but also from the fact that "love" appears to be of central importance for sexual experiences, especially for women. Seventy-one percent of the females and 43% of the males expressly stated that they were in love with their first coitus partner. Further only 8% of the females and 18% of the males, who had intercourse in the 12 months prior to the interview, said they were not in love with their coitus partners. Of those with steady relationships,

Table II. Going Steady (Present Time)^a

	Males (N = 150)	Females (N = 150)
<i>Question:</i>		
Do you have a steady girlfriend (boyfriend) at this time?		
Yes, engaged	5	16
Yes, with intent to marry	19	29
Yes, without intent to marry	23	27
No, but should like to have one	36	13
No, but should not like to have one	17	15
	47	72
	53	28

^a Significance of the sex-specific difference (according to chi-square): $p = 0.001$. All values are in percent.

Table III. Attitudes Toward Extramarital Coitus^a

	Males (N = 150)	Females (N = 150)
Equalitarian-permissive	31	19
Double standard, transitional	1	0
Double standard, orthodox	16	6
Equalitarian-restrictive	53	75
	101	100

^a Significance of the sex-specific difference (according to chi-square): $p = 0.001$. For the calculation of chi-square, categories 1 and 2 as well as 3 and 4 were combined. All values are in percent.

Table IV. Fidelity Within Steady Relationships

	Males ^a (N = 70)	Females ^a (N = 108)	p-Value ^b
<i>Question:</i>			
If the possibility presented itself of having sexual intercourse with a pretty girl (handsome man), do you think you would do so?			
Certainly not	11	36	0.001
Probably not	13	32	
Don't know, depends	30	26	
Probably would	26	2	
Certainly would	20	4	
	100	100	
<i>Question:</i>			
What would you do if your girlfriend or fiancée (your boyfriend or fiancé) had sexual intercourse with another man (girl)?			
Nothing at all	13	11	ns
Remonstrate	38	53	
Do likewise	9	3	
Break up	40	33	
	100	100	
<i>Question:</i>			
Have you had sexual intercourse with other girls (men) since you are going steady with your present girlfriend or fiancée (boyfriend or fiancé)?			
No	64	77	0.01
Once	10	15	
Several times	25	8	
	99	100	

^a All values are in percent.

^b Significance of the sex-specific differences according to chi-square.

81 % of the women and 83 % of the men had already verbally expressed their love to their partner.

Fidelity, Partner Mobility, and Virginity

It is to be expected that the emphasis on partnership and love places a high value on fidelity and implies low partner mobility. Indeed, extramarital coitus is strongly rejected. Only 31 % of the males and 19 % of the females approve of extramarital contacts, at least under certain conditions (see Table III). This restrictiveness of attitudes shows up as well, if not so pronounced, with regard to steady friendships (see Table IV). The majority of those interviewed would not sanction "sexual infidelity" in the partner: 33 % of the women and 40 % of the men would terminate the friendship, 53 % and 38 %, respectively, would reproach the partner, 3 % and 9 %, respectively, stated they would also be "unfaithful."

Men and women assess their own "ability to remain faithful" in a "tempting situation" very differently (see Table IV). Of the women with steady friends, only 6 % were of the opinion that they would engage in coitus with an attractive partner outside their friendship, while 46 % of the men said they would do so. But in any event, 68 % of the women and 24 % of the men were rather sure or very sure that they would remain faithful even in a decidedly tempting situation (as described by our question). In agreement with this disposition, the majority of male (64 %) and female workers (77 %) was "sexually faithful" within the steady friendship. In the conception of the

Table V. Image of the Ideal Partner

	Males ^a (N = 150)	Females ^a (N = 150)	p-Value ^b
She (he) should be good-looking	87	59	0.001
She (he) should have money	15	28	0.01
She (he) should be up-to-date	70	71	ns
She (he) should be intelligent	77	84	ns
She (he) should be thrifty and orderly	82	70	0.05
She (he) should come from a good home	44	47	ns
She (he) should be tender and affectionate	89	92	ns
She (he) should be willing to engage in sexual intercourse	74	62	0.05
She (he) should be good in bed	56	47	ns
She (he) should be affectionate with children	75	82	ns
She (he) should be subordinate to me	23	8	0.001
She should be a good housewife (he should be competent in his job)	81	87	ns
She (he) should be faithful	88	89	ns
She (he) should have mutual interests	54	63	ns
Other men (girls) should be envious of me because of her (him)	49	40	ns

^a All values are in percent.

^b Significance of sex-specific differences according to chi-square.

“ideal partner” (see Table V) fidelity also played a central role; it was desired by almost 90% of the subjects.

This positive valuation of fidelity does not, to be sure, principally disqualify men and women who have coitus experiences with many partners. While a generally tolerant attitude prevails—nearly 90% say “that’s their business”—ambivalent reactions are, however, not to be overlooked: The judgments of the subjects oscillate between “they’re enjoying life” and “they’ll get a bad reputation”; “they’re doing it right” and “they should be ashamed of themselves”; “they’re modern” and “nobody wants to marry them.”

The ambivalence on partner mobility may contribute to the pronounced rarity in “promiscuous” behavior above all by women. In the year before the study, only 2% of nonvirgin women and 18% of the men had six or more coitus partners. Sixty-five percent of the females and 33% of the males had intercourse with only one partner. Most partners were “steady friends” or “acquaintances.” Thirteen percent of the women and 41% of the men had intercourse at least once in the previous year with “pick ups.” Seven percent of the men admitted contacts with prostitutes within this period.

While a high value was placed on marital fidelity and—not quite so strongly pronounced—also on fidelity within steady friendships, the previous sexual experience of a prospective marriage partner was viewed with equanimity: only 3% of the women and 7% of the men unequivocally wanted a marriage partner who is inexperienced when the acquaintanceship is made; with 16% and 37% virginity was desired but not demanded; 26% and 35% were indifferent; and 55% and 20% preferred a partner experienced in coitus. This attitude to virginity largely corresponds to reality, since few workers can expect to find a sexually inexperienced partner. This can be gleaned from the fact that, of those enjoying a steady friendship at the time of data collection, most—68% of the women and 77% of the men—had coitus with other partners. It is certain that almost all workers have premarital coitus experiences at the time of marriage, most of them with several partners.

Mutuality Versus Segregation

We have few findings to support a position on the question of how far the socio-sexual relations of the workers are mutual or segregative. These findings, however, indicate with good consistency that lower-class sociosexuality is determined in much larger part by mutuality than by dissociation, e.g., the main reason given for wanting steady friendships was to spend leisure time together. This motive was given by 77% of the women and 93% of the men who did not have such a friendship at the time of the interview and who had expressed the desire to have one. The possibility of having more frequent sexual relations within such a friendship was indicated by only 13% of the female workers and 44% of the male workers. An ideal partner was expected to be “loving and tender” by 92% of the females and 89% of the males; 63% and 54% desired “common interests” (see Table V).

Clear minorities of those then enjoying a steady relationship correspondingly list sexuality as the most important element in their friendship (11% and 9%, respectively), while the majority (69% and 81%) believe sexuality and “other things” to be

Table VI. Communication on Sexual Themes in the Steady Relationship^a

	Males ^b (N = 53)	Females ^b (N = 81)	p-Value ^c
Contraception	94	75	0.05
Previous sexual experiences with other girls (men)	45	44	ns
On what it was like during sexual intercourse	64	62	ns
On what one would like to do sexually	60	62	ns
On the possibility of abortion in the event of pregnancy	47	37	ns

^a The percentages refer to subjects who are having coitus with their friend within a steady relationship.

^b All values are in percent.

^c Significance of the sex-specific differences according to chi-square.

equally important. Some (20% and 9%) are even of the opinion that "other things" were more important than sexuality. In the opinion of the subjects, therefore, other common activities besides sexuality belong to a partnership.

The desire for mutuality of relations becomes particularly clear when one inquires into the concern for the sexual satisfaction of the partner. Only 2% of the men and women having steady relationships are indifferent to the satisfaction of the partner in coitus. All other subjects desire it; indeed 86% of the women and 85% of the men very strongly.

The realization of these intentions might only be attainable if sexual questions and problems can be and are communicated. Our findings show that such communication does indeed take place among workers (see Table VI). Contraception is the topic most often discussed (75% and 94%, respectively) within steady relationships. Almost two-thirds of these subjects had already spoken of "what it was like during sexual intercourse" and "what one would like to do sexually." From two-fifths to one-half of the subjects had told their partners of "previous sexual experiences with other partners" and discussed abortion as a possible expedient "in the event of pregnancy." On the specific content and intensity of these dialogues, we can make no statement; but, in any case, it appears according to our data that workers are ready to communicate on common sexual problems.

Marriage and Family

The strong tendency toward close personal relationships as well as the high value placed on fidelity in the partnership and particularly in marriage readily lead one to expect a widespread identification with the traditional model of "marriage and family." In fact nearly all male and female subjects wanted to marry and have children: 95% of all women and 89% of all men expressed a definite desire to marry; 3% and 7%

were still undecided and 2% and 5% did not want to marry. Ninety-five percent of the women and 91% of the men desired children.

The definite orientation toward marriage and family can also be seen in the image of the ideal partner (see Table V): for 70 to 90% of the women, he is "competent in his job," "affectionate with children" as well as "thrifty and orderly." For 80% of the men, she is a "good homemaker," likewise "affectionate with children" and "thrift and orderly." Behind this partner image is quite obviously the cliché of the "good husband" and of the "good wife," including the rigid separation of roles: men—job and women—household.

This traditional division of roles is obtained in other findings. Of five given values ("money," "family and children," "a nice boyfriend or girlfriend," "professional success," and "sexual success") "family and children" is in first place among the women, in fourth among the men. Among the men, "professional success" is first place, among the women this is in third. "Sexual success" is put in last place by both sexes. It should not be overlooked here, however, that these data can give information on the relative significance of the given values. Regarded absolutely, marriage and family have great meanings also for the men, as we showed above, but in contrast to the women, the other values ranked still higher in their esteem.

Double Standard and Sex Roles

Attitudes of the double standard type, as already pointed out, are directly represented by only a minority. About a fifth of the subjects, women as well as men, allow a greater premarital permissiveness to men than to women. This was almost entirely an expression of the moderated, i.e., transitional version of the double standard. An orthodox double standard is to be recognized in only 1% each of the male and female workers (see Table I).

Nonequalitarian attitudes to extramarital sexuality were rather less often observed; where they occur they are virtually always "orthodox" (see Table III).

Double standard attitudes toward masturbation could be ascertained in 11% of the females and 12% of the males. Approximately half the cases are the transitional version, the other half the orthodox version. Beyond this, 7% of the women and 5% of the men interestingly advocated a reverse double standard: Some subjects tolerated masturbation more readily in women than in men.

Even if only a minority of workers directly supported a sexual double standard, still other findings show how much sexual norms are sex-linked. There is a traditional image of "natural" sexuality of the man and woman (see Table VII). A lesser sexual appetite is ascribed to women than to men; women are thought to be more faithful than men "by nature"; they should be more reticent in a situation involving sexual contact; and, a frequent opinion, they would have as much enjoyment in coitus as men only if they were in love with their partner.

These stereotypes become relevant in the evaluation of abstinence from coitus and of "promiscuity." Of 20-year-old virgin women (as compared to men) the significantly more frequent opinion is that "they're waiting for true love", "they're decent," or "they're living properly." As opposed to that, it is significantly more often assumed

Table VII. Attitudes Toward Male and Female Sexuality

	Males ^a (N = 150)	Females ^a (N = 150)	p-Value ^b
<i>Question:</i>			
In your opinion do women generally have the same sexual desires as men?			
Yes	32	31	ns
Men somewhat more	42	46	
Men very much more	18	17	
Women somewhat more	7	5	
Women very much more	1	1	
	100	100	
<i>Question:</i>			
Sometimes the view is heard that women should be more reticent than men in the initiation of sexual relations. What do you think of that?			
No	32	25	ns
Yes	59	63	
Don't know	9	13	
	100	101	
<i>Question:</i>			
In your opinion do women have just as much pleasure as men from sexual intercourse?			
No	7	11	0.05
Yes, but only if they're in love with their partner	31	40	
Yes, just as much	51	35	
Don't know	11	14	
	100	100	
<i>Question:</i>			
In your opinion are women naturally more faithful than men?			
No	31	31	ns
Yes	47	53	
Don't know	22	16	
	100	100	

^a All values in percent.^b Significance of the sex-specific differences according to chi-square.

of abstinent males that "they're afraid," "they can't find a girl," "they're not a real man." Women who have many coital partners are significantly more often criticized than "promiscuous" men as follows: "they'll get a bad reputation," "no one will want to marry them," and "they should be ashamed." Of "promiscuous" men, the opinion is significantly more often: "they're doing it right," "they're enjoying life," "those are real men." It follows from this that abstinence is regarded as more characteristic and proper in the female role while in the male role it is partner mobility.

This view of female sexuality as passive and more strongly dependent on personal relations shows up also in sexual behavior. Fifty-nine percent of the men stated that their motive for their first coitus was a "strong sexual desire," but only 26% of the women did so. On the other hand 71% of the women but only 43% of the men were motivated in their first coitus by a "love relationship" to the partner. Finally, more women (74%) than men (58%) agreed to the first coitus "because the partner wanted it."

Particularly pronounced role-specific behavior patterns are obtained with regard to the sexual initiative. Approximately one-third of the subjects declared that the initiative for the first coitus originated on both sides, while 44% of the men and 65% of the women reported the initiative was taken by the man, and only 18% and 1%, respectively, were of the opinion that the women "started it." In getting to know a new partner, the sexual initiative was taken by the man as well: 72% of the male subjects continued their approaches when the girl rejected petting contacts at the first rendezvous. Only 17% continued to meet the girl but did not for awhile make attempts at sexual activity, and 11% broke off the acquaintanceship. In contrast, none of the women ended the acquaintanceship if it did not come to petting. All continued to meet and only 10% tried actively to begin sexual contacts. Even within the steady friendship, the initiative for coitus was much more often left to the man than to the woman. Fifty-four percent of the females and 50% of the males reported that the man always or usually "initiates sexual intercourse." Only 2% of the male and female subjects said that of the women. An equal initiative was noted by 43% and 49%, respectively.

Our findings indicate the sexual norms in the lower class permit only two patterns of distribution of sexual initiative: either the initiative comes predominantly from the man or comes in equal measure from the man and from the woman. According to our data, these sorts of norms due to the double standard appear also to encompass other social interactions, at least in part. Thus, by way of example, significantly more men (23%) than women (8%) expect an ideal partner to be subordinate (see Table V).

Emotional Reactions to Coitus

Some emotional reactions to the first coitus are given in Table VIII, wherein it is seen that first coitus is experienced ambivalently or as conflict. This is particularly true for women who considerably more often reported negative responses ("unpleasant," "afraid of pregnancy," "shame and bad conscience," "disappointment") than positive responses ("feeling of happiness," "feeling more feminine," "pleasantly surprised"). Some women (15%) even experienced first coitus as "disgusting and repugnant." Among the men, the positive reactions dominated; but it shouldn't be overlooked that only a third to a half of them also registered decidedly positive emotions and that a good fourth to a third were disappointed, afraid of a pregnancy, or ashamed.

An entirely different picture results from inquiries into the emotions connected with coitus within the last 12 months (see Table IX). Most workers experienced sexual intercourse as pleasurable and satisfying. Negative emotions were prevalent only where there was real cause for them: about three-fifths of the workers admitted fear of

Table VIII. Emotional Reactions to First Coitus

	Males ^a (<i>N</i> = 115)	Females ^a (<i>N</i> = 113)	<i>p</i> -Value ^b
I was happy	50	35	0.05
I felt more masculine (feminine)	45	32	(0.10)
It was nicer than expected	33	23	ns
I had imagined it to be nicer	35	51	0.02
It was nothing special	26	35	ns
I was afraid of pregnancy	35	45	ns
I was ashamed, had a bad conscience	23	36	0.05
It was unpleasant	12	53	0.001
It was disgusting, repugnant	3	15	0.01

^a All values in percent.^b Significance of sex-specific differences according to chi-square.

pregnancy. Indifference (“it’s actually nothing special”) and aversion toward coitus (“it was unpleasant,” “I was ashamed”) occurred seldom or only very seldom. The strong interest in the satisfaction of the partner is also striking, as well as—particularly among the men—the positive evaluation of their own sexual “achievement” (“I was really good”).

The comparison of the statements on the first coitus and on the coitus in the year prior to data acquisition shows in both sexes an unequivocal increase in ability to experience coitus relations with pleasure and without conflict. Sex-specific differences in emotional reactions to coitus were registered to be sure: they still exist therefore among the sexually experienced as well, insofar as the female workers do not experience pleasure and satisfaction to the same degree as the males.

Table IX. Emotional Reactions to Coitus (Last 12 Months)

	Males ^a (<i>N</i> = 106)	Females ^a (<i>N</i> = 106)	<i>p</i> -Value ^b
It was a lot of fun	78	59	0.01
I was very satisfied	82	65	0.01
I was really good	54	29	0.001
I would like to sleep once with someone else	45	23	0.001
I hope she (he) was satisfied	71	74	ns
I did it only to please the girl (man)	10	25	0.01
It's not really anything special	23	22	ns
I hope there's no pregnancy	61	54	ns
It was unpleasant	1	7	—
I was ashamed	2	12	0.01

^a All values are in percent.^b Significance of the sex-specific differences according to chi-square.

Orgasm by the Woman

The female workers made the following statements on their ability to achieve orgasm in intercourse in the last 12 months before the study: 6% never had orgasm, 20% seldom (in fewer than 25% of all coitus), 26% sometimes (in 25–50% of all coitus), 23% frequently (50–75%), 19% almost always (more than 75%), and 6% always had orgasm. These figures are on average approximately as high as among the female West German students (Schmidt and Sigusch, in press).

We asked those women who did not achieve orgasm in every coitus in the year before the study ($N = 100$) the following question: "What do you think and feel when you do not reach an orgasm during sexual intercourse?" The responses to this question, to which there were no given answer categories, we could gradate as follows:

Sixty-seven percent of the females were more or less strongly disappointed and unsatisfied. Most of the women did not simply submit to the lack of orgasm, but experienced frustration. The frustration is more frequently elaborated extrapunitively (19%) than intrapunitively (8%), i.e., they believe the cause of the failure to achieve orgasm can be found in the behavior of the partner rather than in their own and direct the aggression released by the frustration more against the man than against themselves. While we could determine both extra- and intrapunitive reactions among a further 8% of the women, 31% of the subjects could not be classified according to these criteria.

Twenty-four percent of the females reacted to the nonachievement of orgasm calmly or indifferently. This disposition was only seldom an expression of lethargy (4%). More often the women stated that it was unimportant since it happened so rarely or since orgasm would surely be reached at the next coitus (9%). Finally, 6% found sexual intercourse pleasant even without orgasm and 5% were of the opinion that the difficulty occurred with them only when they were not desirous of coitus and engaged in it only to please their partner.

Nine percent of the women could not verbalize their reactions to not achieving orgasm or did not care to make a statement.

DISCUSSION

In the introduction we tried to differentiate between American and Scandinavian patterns of lower-class sexuality and we now wish to compare the picture of West German worker sexuality with these patterns on the basis of our findings. Not based on direct parallel investigations, such a comparison can be only tentative. It refers to an opposition of studies (1) in which the criterion "class" is variously defined, (2) based on different samples particularly with respect to age and family status, (3) encompass different data collection technique, and (4) in part deal with different areas of sexuality. But as long as no intercultural investigations are available, the indirect comparison we make here is appropriate and scientifically legitimate.

Even keeping in mind the above-mentioned reservations, there is a distinct divergence between the sexual behavior pattern of West German workers and the American pattern and a clear congruence with the Scandinavian pattern of lower-class sexuality. Thus we found hardly any sign of strongly pronounced sexual segrega-

tion, of a deemotionalizing of sexuality, or of extreme double standards with dissatisfaction and desexualization of the female—characteristics which Rainwater (1960, 1964, 1965, 1966) found typical of the American lower classes.

The West German workers regard sexuality much more as a social activity involving reciprocity. Mutuality should definitely be present in the nonsexual areas as well. The strong tendency toward assimilating sexuality with personal and emotional bonds sets the conditions for a partner-centered sexuality, above all among women, in which “love” and “fidelity” are central values.

Double standard attitudes are found in small minorities of West German workers. This by no means signifies a basic retreat from every double standard. Today this is only more subtle and disguised, but can still be seen clearly in the rigid and traditional gender-role stereotypes.

In agreement with the ameliorated double standard—at least with respect to the American pattern—the women of the West German lower class are not labeled as “asexual” or “hyposexual” and also do not regard themselves as such. Indeed the females experience coitus less satisfyingly and less positively on the average than the males, but this sex difference is very surely not class-typical. It remains quite remarkable that most women of the lower class are capable of orgasm and experience their sexuality with thorough pleasure. Failing to achieve orgasm is no longer accepted by them with resignation, with disinterest, or, out of ignorance, as natural. On the contrary, they feel considerable frustration and often call their partner to account. The belief that sexuality is an enjoyment for men and a duty for women certainly has only few adherents in the West German lower class as opposed to the American (see Rainwater, 1964). The desexualization of the women has been displaced by the concept that women may display sexual appetite in a love relationship as much as the male—but not more so.

The sexuality of the West German worker is characterized neither by problematizing and brutalizing, which has been described in the American lower class, nor by an “untamed naturalness,” which implies many prejudices. It is far more, as in Scandinavia, a mixture of liberal and restrictive dispositions and has unmistakable traits that are characteristic of the sexuality of the middle classes. Limiting sexuality to reproduction in the sense of the traditional sex morality is unanimously rejected. The model “marriage and family” is, however, just as unanimously approved; alternatives are apparently not seen. Premarital sexuality is accepted as natural and necessary, but it only copies marital behavior patterns. Romantic love has taken the place of the abstinence norm as regulator of sexual activity.

In our comparison of the American and northwest European studies, we have utilized a relativistic social stratification model—this also applies to our study in general. Membership in a class was defined as the *relative* social position of an individual in his society. Yet the relative social position of an individual does not permit any assertions concerning that individual's actual standard of living. Individuals or groups which occupy the same relative social position within various societies and thus provide a comparable rank within the social hierarchy may differ highly with regard to their socioeconomic situation.

Thus, both those members of the lower-lower class which Rainwater studied in the

U.S.A. and those individuals studied by us belong to the most underprivileged sixth of the members of their respective societies. Nevertheless, there are considerable differences in their standards of living. Rainwater (1965, p. 24) describes his sample as follows: "... often they work only intermittently or are chronically unemployed . . . They live in slum and near-slum neighborhoods, and their housing tends to be cramped and deteriorated. Although many earn fairly good wages when they work . . ., the seasonal or intermittent nature of their jobs and their relatively impulsive spending habits often prevent them from maintaining what most Americans regard as a 'decent' standard of living." By contrast, the individuals investigated in our study had a steady job, were continuously employed, and did not live in slums; they were neither threatened in terms of their material existence nor socially insecure to the same degree applicable to the American workers of the lower-lower class.

Therefore, the differences in sexual behavior and in sexual attitudes between the American and the West German as well as the Scandinavian lower class cannot be imputed to their differing socioeconomic situation. What we have described as the Scandinavian pattern of lower-class sexuality is actually the pattern of the "stable working class" or affluent workers; what we have described as the American pattern is the pattern of the "unstable working class" or nonaffluent workers.³ If, in defining membership in a class, we take not only the relative position within the society into consideration, but also the degree of real social deprivation, then the differences between the Scandinavian and the American pattern, on the one hand, and Swedish and West German workers, on the other hand, are ultimately class differences.

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³ This appears to be corroborated by Rainwater's findings (1965, 1966) according to which the sexual behavior patterns of his "upper-lower class"—which is characterized by "greater prosperity and stability than the lower-lower class" (1965, p. 24) and which can be termed to be part of the "stable working class"—differ clearly from the behavior patterns of his "lower-lower class."

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